



SENIOR CITIZENS WEEK

On the second Tuesday of every month, a group of retired Alberta Agriculture employees known as the Agriculture Oldtimers meet at the provincial agriculture building in Edmonton. They get together to keep in touch with what is happening in agriculture, and to renew old friendships. It is not hard, among this group, to find 1000 years worth of combined experience in our agriculture industry. The Agriculture Oldtimers use this vast experience in continuing to make an active contribution to their community.

Across the province, groups such as this one provide our society with an inexhaustible source of wisdom, vision and energy. Unfortunately, this rich resource is often overlooked.

No one questions the contribution seniors have made to our country in days gone by. After all, they made this province, and our country, what they are today. All too often, though, we tend to think of seniors in the past tense — in terms of what they have accomplished, rather than in terms of what they will accomplish.

The week of June 5-12, 1988, is Senior Citizens Week in Alberta. The theme for the week this year is "Seniors — Active in the Community." I believe this theme is highly appropriate. In the performing arts, in sports, in education and in volunteer service, seniors play a vital role in our community.

Senior Citizens Week is spearheaded by the Provincial Senior Citizens Advisory Council, in conjunction with the Senior Citizens Secretariat. The objectives of the week are to recognize and honour seniors in Alberta, to highlight the positive contributions they are making in their communities, and to promote understanding and encourage positive attitudes toward older people among the young. During this special week, communities across Alberta are hosting special events to showcase the talents and enthusiasm of seniors.

Senior citizens give to society in many ways, but their contributions as volunteer workers for a wide variety of worthwhile causes and organizations are especially notable. In fact, the volunteer help of seniors often forms the foundation upon which community services organizations operate.

An excellent example of this type of work is the Meals-on-Wheels program. Many Alberta communities take advantage of this excellent program, which organizes the delivery of good, nutritious meals to those unable to prepare their own. Often, the Meals-on-Wheels volunteers are seniors delivering to seniors, or to others in need.

Seniors working as volunteers also make an important contribution to our health care system. Many seniors work in hospitals, giving their time and energies to visiting other seniors, to making

a child's stay in hospital less frightening, or to helping out in any number of ways.

Quite apart from these very significant contributions, seniors provide a living tie to our past — an opportunity to appreciate our heritage and to better understand how our country came to be what it is today. As Albertans, we owe our enviable lifestyle largely to the hard work and determination of our pioneers, and to the great personal sacrifices they made along the way. Those pioneers are today our senior citizens.

Senior Citizens Week gives Albertans an excellent opportunity to thank these people for all they have done for this province and for our country in the past. More important, it gives us the perfect chance to thank our seniors for all they do today for our communities, and to encourage them to keep up the good work in the times ahead.

I urge everyone to become involved in 1988's Senior Citizens Week activities, and to work all year round at improving our understanding of the special role older Albertans play in the well-being of our province.